of US $ 0.59 billion of bilateral loans has already been prepaid in the current financial year so far.

Conference on VAT system

712. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Finance Ministers' Conference was held in New Delhi in third week of October, 2003 to sort out the issue of implementation of Value Added Tax system in different States;

(b) if so, what decisions were taken to implement the system; and

(c) what specific benefits and advantages are likely to accrue there from to the consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) to (c) A meeting of Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers was held on 20th October, 2003. The decision taken in the meeting include recommendations pertaining to amendments to the CST Act., 1956, implementation of uniform sales tax floor rate regime, matter relating to levy of sales tax/VAT on goods covered under Additional Duties of Excise Act, 1957, installation of Tax Information Exchange System, imposition of Sales Tax/VAT on items sold through Canteen Stores Department etc. The decisions taken by the Empowered Committee are likely to improve the revenue position of the States and would lead to an overall benefit for the consumers.

Special Credit Scheme for Women

713. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that though certain Public Sector Banks have drawn out specific schemes for extending finance to women, they do not generate information regarding credit provided to women by each of these Banks;

(b) if so, the details of schemes, Bank-wise and reasons for not generating data in that regard; and

(c) if answer to (a) be in the negative what are the details of credit provided by each Bank to women under various schemes during the last three years, year-wise, Bank-wise and State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) No, Sir.